

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 856

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that southwest Florida is an economic, demographic, agricultural, and environmental treasure with many inherent benefits that should be recognized, acknowledged, and appreciated.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 9, 2023

Mr. DONALDS (for himself and Mr. DIAZ-BALART) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Oversight and Accountability

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that southwest Florida is an economic, demographic, agricultural, and environmental treasure with many inherent benefits that should be recognized, acknowledged, and appreciated.

Whereas, on May 13, 1887, the Florida State Legislature partitioned Monroe County, Florida, to create Lee County, Florida;

Whereas, on May 8, 1923, the Florida State Legislature partitioned Lee County, Florida, to create Collier County, Florida;

Whereas, on May 8, 2023, Collier County celebrated its 100th anniversary in Everglades City, the birthplace of Collier County;

Whereas Collier County is the largest county in Florida with a total area of 2,305 square miles, and a land area of 2,025 square miles;

Whereas Lee County has a total area of 1,212 square miles, and a land area of 785 square miles;

Whereas Collier County has 48 miles of white sandy beaches with 53 public access points, and approximately 80 percent of land area in Collier County is set aside for preservation;

Whereas Lee County has 47 miles of white sandy beaches with 101 public access points;

Whereas Collier County hosts several different natural environmental communities, such as the—

- (1) basin swamp;
- (2) baygall;
- (3) beach dune;
- (4) coastal berm;
- (5) coastal grassland;
- (6) coastal interdunal swale;
- (7) coastal strand;
- (8) dome swamp;
- (9) estuarine composite substate;
- (10) hydric hammock;
- (11) mangrove swamp;
- (12) marine composite substate;
- (13) marine unconsolidated substate;
- (14) maritime hammock;
- (15) mesic flatwoods;

- (16) mesic hammock;
- (17) rockland hammock;
- (18) salt marsh;
- (19) scrub;
- (20) scrubby flatwoods;
- (21) shell mound;
- (22) sinkhole lake;
- (23) slough;
- (24) swamp lake; and
- (25) wet flatwoods;

Whereas Lee County hosts several different natural environmental communities, such as the—

- (1) beach dune;
- (2) coastal grassland;
- (3) coastal interdunal swale;
- (4) coastal strand;
- (5) depression marsh;
- (6) mangrove swamp;
- (7) maritime hammock;
- (8) mesic flatwoods;
- (9) scrub; and
- (10) shell mound;

Whereas Collier County's Land Development Code affords protection to several species, such as the—

- (1) bald eagle;
- (2) butterfly orchid;
- (3) cowhorn orchid;
- (4) Curtiss's milkweed;
- (5) Florida black bear;
- (6) Florida panther;
- (7) Florida scrub jay;
- (8) Florida clamshell orchid;

- (9) ghost orchid;
- (10) giant wild-pine;
- (11) gopher tortoise;
- (12) inflated wild-pine;
- (13) red-cockaded woodpecker;
- (14) sea turtle;
- (15) stiff-leaved wild-pine;
- (16) twisted air plant;
- (17) west coast prickly apple; and
- (18) West Indian manatee;

Whereas Lee County's Land Development Code affords protection to several species, such as the—

- (1) American alligator;
- (2) American crocodile;
- (3) American oystercatcher;
- (4) Arctic peregrine falcon;
- (5) Audubon's crested caracara;
- (6) beautiful pawpaw;
- (7) Big Cypress fox squirrel;
- (8) brown pelican;
- (9) burrowing owl;
- (10) Curtis milkweed;
- (11) eastern indigo snake;
- (12) Everglades mink;
- (13) Fakahatchee burmannia;
- (14) Florida black bear;
- (15) Florida coontie;
- (16) Florida panther;
- (17) Florida sandhill crane;
- (18) Florida scrub jay;
- (19) golden creeper;
- (20) gopher tortoise;
- (21) gopher frog;

- (22) hand adder's tongue fern;
- (23) iguana hackberry;
- (24) joewood;
- (25) least tern;
- (26) limpkin;
- (27) little blue heron;
- (28) piping plover;
- (29) prickly-apple;
- (30) red-cockaded woodpecker;
- (31) reddish egret;
- (32) roseate spoonbill;
- (33) roseate tern;
- (34) Sanibel love grass;
- (35) satinleaf;
- (36) simpon's stopper;
- (37) snail kite;
- (38) snowy egret;
- (39) southeastern American kestrel;
- (40) southeastern snowy plover;
- (41) spiny hackberry;
- (42) tricolored heron;
- (43) twisted air plant;
- (44) wild cotton; and
- (45) wood stork;

Whereas Collier County is home to 25 threatened and endangered species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973;

Whereas Lee County is home to 23 threatened and endangered species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973;

Whereas Collier County hosts several Florida State parks and lands, including—

- (1) Collier-Seminole State Park;
- (2) Corkscrew Regional Ecological Watershed;

- (3) Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park;
- (4) Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park;
- (5) Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest; and
- (6) Picayune Strand State Forest;

Whereas Lee County hosts several Florida State parks and lands, including—

- (1) Babcock-Webb Wildlife Management Area;
- (2) Cape Haze Aquatic Preserve;
- (3) Cayo Costa State Park;
- (4) Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park;
- (5) Corkscrew Regional Ecological Watershed;
- (6) Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve;
- (7) Estero Bay Preserve State Park;
- (8) Gasparilla Island State Park;
- (9) Gasparilla Sound-Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserve;
- (10) Koreshan State Park;
- (11) Matlacha Pass Aquatic Preserve; and
- (12) Pine Island Sound Aquatic Preserve;

Whereas Collier County is home to several federally designated lands, including—

- (1) Big Cypress National Preserve;
- (2) Everglades National Park;
- (3) Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge;
- (4) Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve; and
- (5) Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge;

Whereas Lee County is home to federally designated J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge, which is part of the largest undeveloped mangrove ecosystem in the United States;

Whereas Collier County is home to several bays, inlets, rivers, and paddling trails, such as, the—

- (1) Addison Bay;
- (2) Barfield Bay;
- (3) Barron River;
- (4) Blackwater River;
- (5) Chokoloskee Bay Clam Bay;
- (6) Cocohatchee River;
- (7) Fakahatchee Bay;
- (8) Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail;
- (9) Goodland Bay;
- (10) Gulf Intracoastal Waterway;
- (11) Gullivan Bay;
- (12) Johnson Bay;
- (13) Little Hickory Bay;
- (14) Moorings Bay;
- (15) Naples Bay;
- (16) Pelican Bay;
- (17) Rookery Bay;
- (18) Tarpon Bay;
- (19) Water Turkey Bay; and
- (20) Venetian Bay;

Whereas Lee County is home to several bays, inlets, rivers, and paddling trails, such as the—

- (1) Caloosahatchee River;
- (2) Charlotte Harbor;
- (3) Estero Bay;
- (4) Estero River;
- (5) Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail;
- (6) Gulf Intracoastal Waterway;
- (7) Hendry Creek; and

(8) San Carlos Bay;

Whereas located in Lee County, Cape Coral has more than 400 miles of canals, which is more than any other city in the world;

Whereas Lee County has one of the world's largest populations of bottlenose dolphins and West Indian manatees;

Whereas Fort Myers' Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW), located in Lee County, was ranked by Travel Lens as the number 1 airport in the country in 2022;

Whereas Lee County is home for the spring training of the Boston Red Sox, and the Minnesota Twins Major League Baseball teams, who play at JetBlue Park and Hammond Stadium, respectively;

Whereas the Florida Everblades, a professional minor league ice hockey team, play at Hertz Arena, which is located in Lee County, Florida;

Whereas the Fort Myers Mighty Missiles, a Minor League Baseball team of the Florida State League and the Single-A affiliate of the Minnesota Twins, also play at Hammond Stadium in Lee County, Florida;

Whereas Collier County is ranked 1st out of 67 Florida counties in golf courses per capita, and there is 1 golf course per every 23 square miles in Collier County;

Whereas Lee County is ranked 4th out of 67 Florida counties in golf courses per capita, and there is 1 golf course per every 7 square miles in Lee County;

Whereas Collier County had a population of 390,912 in 2022, which represents a 2.2-percent growth from 2021, and is the 19th-largest population in the State of Florida;

Whereas Lee County had a population of 802,178 in 2022, which represents a 2.5-percent growth from 2021, and is the 8th-largest population in the State of Florida;

Whereas Collier County is projected to have a population of 501,020 by the year 2050, which would represent a 22.7-percent increase in population from 2025 to 2050;

Whereas Lee County is projected to have a population of 1,118,093 by 2050, which would represent a 31.3-percent increase in population from 2025 to 2050;

Whereas Collier County ranks as the 5th top destination in the United States for 2nd homes;

Whereas Lee County ranks as the 3rd top destination in the United States for 2nd homes;

Whereas Collier County had the 20th-highest gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the State of Florida, measured at 9.4 percent in 2021;

Whereas Lee County had the 16th-highest GDP growth in the State of Florida, measured at 9.7 percent in 2021;

Whereas Collier County accounted for \$239,600,000 in exports in 2021;

Whereas Lee County accounted for \$797,500,000 in exports in 2021;

Whereas Collier County had 157,390 in total employment in 2021, which represents a 13.9-percent increase since 2016, and healthcare and social assistance was the largest industry in Collier County in 2021;

Whereas Lee County had 286,420 in total employment in 2021, which represents a 14.5-percent increase since 2016, and retail trade was the largest industry in Lee County in 2021;

Whereas Collier County had 2,502 students learning from home during the 2022–2023 academic year;

Whereas Lee County had 3,760 students learning from home during the 2022–2023 academic year;

Whereas Collier County had 4,981 students enrolled in private schools during the 2022–2023 academic year, which represents a 40.7-percent increase from the 2015–2016 academic year;

Whereas Lee County had 9,706 students enrolled in private schools during the 2022–2023 academic year, which represents a 36.3-percent increase from the 2015–2016 academic year;

Whereas Collier County had 48,082 students enrolled in public schools during the 2022–2023 academic year;

Whereas Lee County had 99,354 students enrolled in public schools during the 2022–2023 academic year;

Whereas, in 2021, residents of Collier County held 115,635 bachelor's degrees, which represents a 35.1-percent increase since 2014;

Whereas, in 2021, residents of Lee County held 175,743 bachelor's degrees, which represents a 36.8-percent increase since 2014;

Whereas Collier County had 186,544 married residents in 2021, accounting for 58 percent of the population at least 15 years of age;

Whereas Lee County had 343,098 married residents in 2021, accounting for 53 percent of the population at least 15 years of age;

Whereas, in 2021, Collier County had 22,148 veterans aged 35 years old and older, including—

(1) 9,077 veterans that served during the Vietnam Era;

(2) 3,821 veterans that served during the Vietnam Era and Korean war;

(3) 3,821 veterans that served during the Korean war;

(4) 141 veterans that served in between the Korean war and World War II; and

(5) 1,474 veterans that served during World War II;

Whereas, in 2021, Lee County had 51,186 veterans aged 35 years and older, including—

(1) 22,358 veterans that served during the Vietnam Era;

(2) 7,056 veterans that served during the Vietnam Era and Korean War;

(3) 5,341 veterans that served during the Korean war;

(4) 249 veterans that served in between the Korean war and World War II;

(5) 1,934 veterans that served during World War II; and

(6) 12 veterans that served before World War II;

Whereas, in 2021, 6,561 Collier County residents 65 years and older lived in a different State a year ago, representing 5.5 percent of the total 65 year and older population in Collier County;

Whereas, in 2021, 9,280 Lee County residents 65 years and older lived in a different State a year ago, representing 4.3 percent of the total 65 year and older population in Lee County;

Whereas Collier County had a median age of 51.5 years old in 2021, and had 119,479 residents that were at least 65 years of age in 2021;

Whereas Lee County had a median age of 48.9 years old in 2021, and had 213,650 residents that were at least 65 years of age in 2021;

Whereas Collier County had 83,012 residents born in Florida in 2021, constituting 22 percent of Collier County's population;

Whereas Lee County had 195,215 residents born in Florida in 2021, accounting for 26 percent of Lee County's population;

Whereas Collier County had 1,877 lodging establishments in 2023, resulting in a 482.9-percent increase since 2016;

Whereas Lee County had 2,099 lodging establishments in 2023, resulting in a 114.6-percent increase since 2016;

Whereas Collier County had 322 farms in 2017, with 258 farms or 80 percent of all farms being less than 100 acres;

Whereas Lee County had 800 farms in 2017, with 706 farms or 88 percent of all farms being less than 100 acres;

Whereas Collier County had 148,461 acres of farmland in 2017, and Lee County had 87,189 acres of farmland in 2017;

Whereas Collier County had 219 farms that focused on animal production in 2017, representing a 92.1-percent increase from 2002;

Whereas Lee County had 540 farms that focused on animal production in 2017, representing a 47.9-percent increase from 2002;

Whereas the market value of agriculture products sold in Collier County totaled \$189,700,000 in 2017, and the total value of agricultural products in Lee County totaled \$104,400,000 in 2017;

Whereas Collier County produced 2,500,000 boxes of citrus fruits in the 2021–2022 season, ranking 7th highest in the State; and

Whereas Lee County produced 480,000 boxes of citrus fruits in the 2021–2022 season, ranking 13th highest in the State: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives recog-
2 nizes, acknowledges, and appreciates the economic poten-
3 tial, demographic conglomeration, agricultural diversity,
4 and environmental paradise that Lee County, Florida, and
5 Collier County, Florida, have to offer.

○